

# THE ROLE OF SPIRITUAL CARE IN DISASTERS

SMART 1/19/11

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# WHAT IS SPIRITUALITY?

- ❖ Spirituality is a part of culture.
- ❖ There is a significant difference between spirituality and religion.
- ❖ Spirituality can be religious or non-religious.



# DESCRIPTIONS

- ❖ Spirituality refers to an inner belief system. It is a “spirit-to-spirit” relationship to oneself, others and the God of ones understanding. Everyone is a spiritual being.
- ❖ “Spirituality is a personal quest for the transcendent...” Rabbi Eric Lankin



# SO WHAT'S RELIGION?

- ❖ Religion refers to the externals of a belief system: places of worship, prayers, traditions, rites, etc. While everyone is a spiritual being, not all spiritual beings are religious.



# WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- ❖ “Disaster effects the entire fabric of a community that existed prior to the event and can cause traumatic stress among the whole community. Disaster recovery is in large part the rebuilding of community, the re-tying of the thousands of strands of relationship in the fabric of our being together that have been severed by the disaster.”



Rev. J Robinson, Jr



# SPIRITUAL WELL- BEING

- ❖ An individual who expresses affirmation of life in a relation with a higher power (as defined by the person), self, community and environment that nurtures and celebrates wholeness.

Handbook of Nursing Diagnosis  
Carpenito, 7<sup>th</sup> ED.; 1997



# SIGNS OF POSITIVE SPIRITUALITY

- ❖ A sense of awe and wonder.
- ❖ A sense of community.
- ❖ A sense of personal mission.
- ❖ Enthusiasm for continuous discovery and creativity.
- ❖ A sense of well-being and joy.



# SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

“ The state at which an individual or group experiences or is at risk of experiencing a disturbance in the belief or value system that provides strength, hope, and meaning to life.”



Handbook of Nursing Diagnosis  
Carpenito, 7<sup>th</sup> ED.; 1997



# SIGNS OF POTENTIAL SPIRITUAL DISTRESS

- ❖ Reconsidering core tenets of religious beliefs.
- ❖ Question like “Why did God do this?”
- ❖ Questioning justice and meaning.
- ❖ Feeling far from previously held beliefs.
- ❖ Closing off from loved ones.
- ❖ Feeling a need to be cleansed.
- ❖ Feeling despair, hopelessness.
- ❖ Feeling guilty, feeling of shame.
- ❖ Wondering about life and death.
- ❖ Crying.
- ❖ Anger toward responders, family, God.



# WHAT IS SPIRITUAL CARE?

- ❖ Anything that assists an individual, family or community in drawing upon their own spiritual perspective as a source of strength, hope and healing.
- ❖ Anything that nurtures the human spirit in coping.



# BASIC STANDARDS & PRINCIPLES OF DISASTER SPIRITUAL CARE

- ❖ Offer presence and hospitality.
- ❖ Meet, accept and respect persons exactly as they are.
- ❖ Do No Harm- Never evangelize, proselytize or exploit persons in vulnerable need.
- ❖ Spiritual Care Providers provide sensitive, appropriate care for *all* persons and celebrate and respect *every* spiritual perspective.



# WHAT LEADS TO A SPIRITUAL FOCUS/CRISIS?

Physical causes:

- ❖ Accidents
- ❖ Disasters
- ❖ Disease/major medical issues
- ❖ Lack of sleep/food/water





# WHAT LEADS TO A SPIRITUAL FOCUS/CRISIS cont.

Emotional experiences or transitions

- ❖ Birth/ Death
- ❖ Marriage/separation/divorce
- ❖ Joining /leaving a faith community
- ❖ Change in lifestyle
- ❖ Moving
- ❖ Job loss
- ❖ Loss of a friendship
- ❖ Near death experiences, of self or a loved one





# TYPES OF SPIRITUAL CARE PROVIDERS

## Community Faith Leaders:

- ❖ Persons who have different levels of education and training pertaining to their own faith traditions and its systems of instruction and certification.
- ❖ Primarily support their own members
- ❖ Already recognized by the community and will be sought out for spiritual support



# TYPES OF SPIRITUAL CARE LEADERS cont.

## Chaplains:

- ❖ Have completed the education and certification to be a faith leader in their own tradition.
- ❖ Have completed series of courses to heighten awareness of diverse faith traditions. Hospital Chaplains also take courses in Clinical Pastoral education to help them function in institutional settings.



# ETHICAL STANDARD AND CODES OF BEHAVIOR

- ❖ Respect for diverse faith traditions.
- ❖ Concern for confidentiality.
- ❖ Prohibition of proselytizing or evangelizing.
- ❖ Respect for social diversity.
- ❖ Descriptions of professional boundaries that guarantee safety of clients.
- ❖ Mechanisms for ensuring that caregivers function at appropriate training and education levels.



# ARE 'LAYPEOPLE' SPIRITUAL CAREGIVERS?

- ❖ Have you ever listened to someone share their feelings?
- ❖ Have you ever helped provide a quiet area?
- ❖ Have you ever prayed with or for someone affected by a disaster?
- ❖ Have you ever left flowers or other objects at a memorial site?
- ❖ Have you ever offered a hug, provided food/shelter/care/clothing, etc?





# SPIRITUAL CARE “DO’S”

Things to say:

“I am so very sorry.”

“My heart is with you”

“What can I do to help you at this time?”

“My sympathy for your loss”

- ❖ Offer prayer, if requested.
- ❖ Support people in finding their own solutions.
- ❖ Permit people to share their memories/stories.
- ❖ Listen actively and without judgment.
- ❖ Share your emotions sincerely and appropriately.





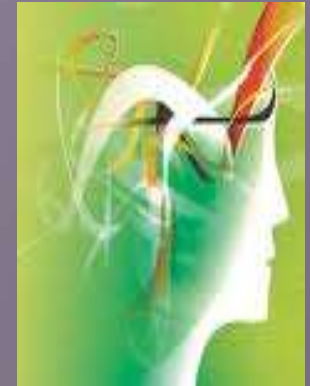
# THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ❖ Avoid clichés.
- ❖ Don't avoid using a deceased victim's name.
- ❖ Do not preach.
- ❖ Be cautious about giving advice.
- ❖ Beware of making promises.
- ❖ Encourage people to be connected with loved ones.
- ❖ Seek/ refer to Mental Health when appropriate.
- ❖ Grief looks different in other cultures.
- ❖ Be open-minded.
- ❖ Demonstrate respect.
- ❖ Recognize that is difficult to express feeling in a second language.



# ISN'T THIS WHAT MENTAL HEALTH DOES?

- ❖ Similarities between the two healing modalities:
- ❖ Concern for emotional well-being.
- ❖ Practice of attentive listening as part of care
- ❖ Embracing a holistic view of a person.



Both disciplines offer comfort and bring relief from undue stress. Each group is in a unique position to refer client's to each other's care as appropriate.

# EARLY PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION (EPI)

Is a body of psychological interventions that mitigate acute distress while not interfering with the natural healing process.

These interventions include:

- ❖ Pre-incident training
- ❖ Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)
- ❖ Psychological First Aid
- ❖ Long term Counseling and Therapy



The Mental Health Sector of SMART and other community organizations offer these trainings.

# LONG TERM RECOVERY

Activities for this stage may include:

- ❖ Community Spiritual Assessment
- ❖ Spiritual Care Interventions to kindle hope
- ❖ Attention to emotional and spiritual issues around anniversary dates
- ❖ Organized community services of memorial and remembrance
- ❖ Retreat opportunities for care givers



# THOUGHTS

Hope consists in asserting that there is at the heart of being, beyond all data, beyond all interventions and all calculations, a mysterious principle which is in connivance with me...

There can be no hope that does not constitute itself through a we and for a we.



Gabriel Marcel





# QUESTIONS



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